The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1.　　　A method of annotating an image, said method comprising the steps of:

displaying the image and a plurality of icons, each icon being associated with metadata;

selecting at least one of said icons depending on at least one subject of the image; and

storing the metadata associated with said selected icon as an annotation of the subject of the image.

2.　　　A method according to claim 1, wherein said selecting step comprises the sub-steps of:

selecting at least one of said icons depending on said at least one subject of the image;

dragging the selected icon to the image;

dropping the dragged icon on the subject of the image; and

detecting the subject based on the position at which the icon is dropped, wherein said storing step stores the metadata associated with the dropped icon as an annotation of the subject of the image.

3.　　　A method according to claim 2, wherein said detecting step extracts the subject from the image based on the dropped position when the dragged icon is dropped on the image.

4.　　　A method according to claim 3, wherein said subject is extracted based on the colour information of the dropped position.

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5.   A method according to claim 3, wherein said detecting step extracts a predetermined sized region of the subject based on the dropped position and said storing step stores the metadata associated with the dropped icon as an annotation of the region of the subject.

6.   A method according to claim 2, further comprising the step of constructing regions about locations at which said subject is rendered in said image.

7.   A method according to claim 6, wherein said detecting step detects one of the regions of the subject based on the position at which the icon is dropped, and said storing step stores the metadata associated with the dropped icon as an annotation of the detected region of the subject in the image.

8.   A method according to claim 6, wherein said dragging step further comprises the steps of:

dragging the selected icon to the image; and

emphasizing the region under the dragged icon.

9.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of constructing a bounding box about locations at which said subject is rendered in said image.

10.   A method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of storing the location of said bounding box.

11.   A method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of extracting a part of said image based on the bounding box.

12.   A method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of displaying the extracted part of said image.

13.   A method according to claim 9, wherein a size of said bounding box is determined automatically.

14.   A method according to claim 9, wherein a size of said bounding box is changeable by a user.

15.   A method according to claim 1, wherein said metadata as the annotation of the subject is displayed upon selecting said subject in the image.

16.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

providing a list of metadata; and

associating the list of metadata and the plurality of icons.

17.   A method according to claim 16, wherein said list of metadata is provided from a database.

18.   A method according to claim 1, wherein said storing step stores the metadata as the annotation of the subject of the image by using a tag indicating an association with said image.

19.   A method according to claim 18, wherein the metadata associated with the subject of the image is stored in an XML file.

20.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of e-mailing at least the image to at least one e-mail address based on the metadata associated with the image.

21.   A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of replacing the default icon by the icon generated based on the subject of the image.

22.   A computer program for a computer, comprising software code portions for performing the steps of any one of claims 1 to 21.

23.   A computer readable medium storing a computer program, wherein said computer program comprises software code portions for performing the steps of any one of claims 1 to 21.

24.   An apparatus for annotating an image, said apparatus comprising:

display means for displaying the image and a plurality of icons, each icon being associated with metadata;

selection means for selecting at least one of said icons depending on at least one subject of the image; and

storage means for storing the metadata associated with said selected icon as an annotation of the subject of the image.

25.   The apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising:

means for dragging the selected icon to the image and dropping the dragged icon on the subject of the image; and

detection means for detecting the subject based on the position at which the icon is dropped, wherein said storage means stores the metadata associated with the dropped

5   icon as an annotation of the subject of the image.

26.   The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said detection means extracts the subject from the image based on the dropped position when the dragged icon is dropped on the image.

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27.   The apparatus according to claim 26, wherein said subject is extracted based on the colour information of the dropped position.

28.   The apparatus according to claim 25, wherein said detection means extracts a predetermined sized region of the subject based on the dropped position and said storage

15   means stores the metadata associated with the dropped icon as an annotation of the region of the subject.

29.   The apparatus according to claim 25, further comprising means for constructing

20   regions about locations at which said subject is rendered in said image.

30.   The apparatus according to claim 29, wherein said detection means detects one of the regions of the subject based on the position at which the icon is dropped, and said storage means stores the metadata associated with the dropped icon as an annotation of

25   the detected region of the subject in the image.

31.   The apparatus according to claim 29, wherein a region under a dragged icon is emphasized.

32.   The apparatus according to claim 25, further comprising means for constructing a bounding box about locations at which said subject is rendered in said image.

33.   The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein said storage means further stores the location of said bounding box.

34.   The apparatus according to claim 32, further comprising means for extracting a part of said image based on the bounding box.

35.   The apparatus according to claim 34, wherein said display means further displays the extracted part of said image.

36.   The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein a size of said bounding box is determined automatically.

37.   The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein a size of said bounding box is changeable by a user.

38.   The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said metadata as the annotation of the subject is displayed upon selecting said subject in the image.

39.   The apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising:

    means for providing a list of metadata; and

association means for associating the list of metadata and the plurality of icons.

40. The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein said list of metadata is provided from a database.

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41. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein said storage means stores the metadata as the annotation of the subject of the image by using a tag indicating an association with said image.

10 42. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein the metadata associated with the subject of the image is stored in an XML file.

43. The apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising means for e-mailing at least the image to at least one e-mail address based on the metadata associated with the 15 image.

44. The apparatus according to claim 24, further comprising means for replacing the default icon by the icon generated based on the subject of the image.

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